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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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To: The Secretary
The Under Secretary
Through: G - Mr. Merchant *WMS*
S/S *g*
From: EUR - Foy D. Kohler *IQW*

Subject: Proposed Reductions of USAF Units Committed to NATO for 1960

Discussion:

The Air Force memorandum given you by Secretary Gates on November 25 (Tab D) proposes a reduction of seven USAF squadrons below the U. S. commitments to NATO for calendar year 1960. Three of these are tactical fighter squadrons in Europe, one is a fighter interceptor squadron in Iceland, and three are C-119 transport squadrons in Europe. I understand from Mr. Merchant that Secretary Gates is awaiting a reply from you to these proposed reductions, but with the explicit understanding that, if you do not find the proposals acceptable, Air Force budget funds can be found to maintain the squadrons through calendar year 1960 (Tab C).

Attached at Tab A is a proposed letter to Secretary Gates which states our conclusions that none of the seven squadrons should be withdrawn at this time, but that it might be possible to ~~we~~ withdraw the three transport squadrons in a few months on the basis of the Air Force proposal for substituting a rotational C-130 transport squadron which would have an equivalent airlift, on a ton mile basis, to the three C-119 squadrons.

The proposed letter does not attempt to analyse the suggested rationale for withdrawal of the tactical fighter squadrons except in the case of the one stationed in Iceland which requires special comment. We believe it is sufficient for your letter to say that most of the reasons advanced in the Air Force memorandum would be unconvincing to our NATO allies, and to call attention to the adverse political consequences of a withdrawal under present circumstances. However, there is attached for your reference at Tab B a comment on the rationale advanced by the Air Force for deactivation of the three fighter squadrons in Europe.

Recommendation:

That you sign the letter to Secretary Gates at Tab A.

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Concurrences:

RA - Mr. Tuthill *JWT per Rm*
BNA - Mr. Rewinkle *Rm*

Attachments:

1. Tab A - Proposed letter to Secretary Gates;
2. Tab B - Comment on rationale advanced for deactivation of three fighter squadrons in Europe;
3. Tab C - Memorandum to Mr. Kohler from Mr. Merchant 11/25/59;
4. Tab D - Air Force Memorandum.

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Comments on Air Force Rationale for
Withdrawal of Three USAF Fighter Squadrons
from NATO-Committed Forces in Europe

2. a. Air Force Reason: "U.S. programs are and will continue to provide an increasing combat capability to NATO through the provision of advanced weapons to our Allies and to our deployed forces. Examples are the present deliveries of Thor and Jupiter missiles, early deployment of the all-weather F-102 interceptor and the forthcoming F-105D all-weather tactical fighter."

Comment: The provision of advanced weapons by the U.S. to our allies and to U.S. forces would not compensate for a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe because agreed NATO force requirements are based on the provision of these advanced weapons but do not allow for the proposed withdrawal of Air Force squadrons.

2. b. Air Force Reason: "As advanced weapons are integrated into our programs, the elimination of older types is dictated in the interest of the overall USAF force requirement."

Comment: This appears to place the interest of USAF force requirements above those of NATO Shield defense.

2. c. Air Force Reason: "Unit redeployments from France, stemming from French refusal to authorize nuclear storage rights, present a basing problem in Germany. Utilization of U.K. bases lessens the combat effectiveness of fighter forces."

Comment: These problems do not appear so serious as to justify a reduction in the combat strength of U.S. forces in Europe.

2. d. Air Force Reason: "Increased mobility and increased combat capability of U.S. based augmentation forces more than offset the small reduction (3 Tac fighter sq) in USAF strike forces in NATO."

Comment: This suggests a change of policy in the direction of "Fortress America" which would not only be unconvincing to NATO European countries but would confirm their gravest apprehensions.

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